



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



HOW YOU CAN SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Take care of others by taking care of yourself.

Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are sick.

Stay at Home and Physically Distance

Stay at home whenever you can. Maintain 2 meters distance from those outside of your household.

COVID 19: Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings

March 27, 2020

Educators, administrators and support staff play a key role in protecting students and their families from, and minimizing the impact of, infection and illness. This is especially important at this time as we work to prevent and minimize the spread of the novel COVID-19 virus.

Here are some guidelines about hand washing, cleaning and ideas about physical distancing to consider in K-12 school settings.

Note: based on advice from the Public Health Officer, all in-person instruction in K-12 schools was suspended effective March 17, 2020. Within this context, school districts and independent school authorities were asked to ensure on-going care and learning opportunities for children of essential service workers as a top priority. During the period of time that in-person instruction is suspended, it is anticipated that the only children present in-person in K-12 school settings will be the children of essential service workers requiring care or other unique circumstances (e.g. vulnerable students, students with disabilities). These guidelines are intended to assist school districts and independent school authorities in maintaining safe and healthy work environments for these unique circumstances, not to suggest that all in-person instruction is resuming.

If you're ill – stay at home.

Within normal educational settings, children and staff will often have influenza or other respiratory viruses with symptoms similar to COVID-19. For this reason, all children and staff who are ill with fever or infectious respiratory symptoms of any kind need to stay home. This includes children of essential service workers who are ill. If you are at all unsure of your status, the COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool is a valuable resource to help assess whether you should be staying home or not.

Encouraging hand hygiene

Both students and staff can pick up germs easily, from anything they touch, and can spread those germs to objects, surfaces, food and people. Thorough hand washing with plain soap and water is still the single most effective way to reduce the spread of illness.



Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.

Non-medical inquiries (ex. travel, physical distancing): 1-888-COVID19 (1888-268-4319) or text 604-630-0300



Children forget about proper hand washing so staff and students should practice often and staff should model washing hands properly in a fun and relaxed way. Everyone should wash their hands more often!

When sinks for hand washing are simply not available in close proximity (i.e. if students and staff are participating in activities outside), you may use alcohol-based hand sanitizers (ABHS) containing at least 60% alcohol. Know that this method is not very effective when a child's hands are quite soiled, when coming in from outside, for example, so be sure to wash hands with soap and water as soon as practically possible. Read labels and wash hands with sanitizer the same way you would wash with soap and water.

Six steps to proper handwashing

1. Wet hands with warm running water.
2. Apply a small amount of liquid soap. Antibacterial soap is not required.
3. Rub hands together **for at least 20 seconds** (sing the ABC's). Rub palms, backs of hands, between fingers and under nails/creating a lather.
4. Rinse off all soap with running water.
5. Dry hands with a clean, disposable towel.
6. Discard the used towel in the waste container.

Children should wash their hands...

- When they arrive at school and before they go home
- Before and after any transitions within the school setting (e.g. to another classroom, indoor-outdoor transitions, moving to on-site childcare, etc.)
- Before eating and drinking
- After using the toilet
- After playing outside or handling pets
- After sneezing or coughing into hands
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty

Teachers, administrators and support staff should wash hands...

- When they arrive at school and before they go home
- Before handling food or assisting children with eating
- Before and after giving or applying medication or ointment to a child or self
- After using the toilet
- After contact with body fluids (i.e., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood)
- After cleaning tasks (staff)
- After removing gloves
- After handling garbage



- Whenever hands are visibly dirty

Cough/sneeze etiquette:

- Cough and sneeze into the crease of the elbow or tissue

Fever or coughing

If a child or staff member starts showing symptoms of what could be influenza or COVID-19, it is important to:

- Contact the child's parent or caregiver to come and pick them up right away.
- Have a separate and supervised area where you can promptly separate a child from others until their parent or caregiver can come and pick them up. Staff who display symptoms should go home right away.
- Continue to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene such as coughing or sneezing into the creases of elbows and throwing tissues out immediately after use.
- Do a thorough cleaning of the space once the child has been picked up and ensure that everyone who may have had contact with the child washes their hands thoroughly.

The use of masks

- Masks are not recommended for children. In young children in particular, masks can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes.

Maintain cleaning and disinfecting policies

We don't yet know how long the virus causing COVID-19 lives on surfaces, but early evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of objects and high-touch surfaces is very important to help to prevent the transmission of viruses from contaminated objects and surfaces.

- Make sure you are well-stocked with hand washing supplies at all times (i.e., soap, clean towels, paper towels and, if needed, minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- Use space strategically and consolidate cleaning efforts accordingly. This means considering where students and staff will be present and focusing cleaning efforts on those locations (as opposed to the entire school). This will help maximize cleaning supplies and focus cleaning efforts.
- Increase how often you clean the premises and any toys or items used.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly.
- Stay on top of waste management. Empty garbage containers often.
- Clean high-touch electronic devices (i.e., keyboards, tablets, smartboards) with minimum 60% alcohol (i.e., alcohol prep wipes) making sure your wipe makes contact with the surface for 1 minute for disinfection.
- Use water, household detergents and common disinfectant products as this should be sufficient for cleaning and disinfection in an educational setting.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada has also posted [guidance](#) on cleaning and disinfecting public spaces, including recommendations regarding cleaning procedures and protocols.



What about toys?

- Keep enough toys out to encourage individual play. Items that may encourage group play in close proximity or increase the risk of hand-to-hand contact (i.e. playdough) should be avoided. Try to limit toys/items only to those that can be easily cleaned (i.e., no dress-up clothes or stuffed animals).

Physical Distancing Ideas

Many school districts and independent school authorities have asked how the Provincial Health Officer's order banning gatherings of more than 50 people and applies in a K-12 school setting. It is important to understand that the PHO order is primarily intended to prevent large groups of people from gathering in close quarters with one another. The PHO recognizes that schools will require some flexibility when it comes to providing care and learning opportunities to the children of essential services workers and potentially vulnerable students.

The order does not apply to students or staff in a school setting provided that school physical distancing measures can be followed. This means that there can be more than 50 students and staff in a school at any given time if they are not all in one area at the same time and are actively engaged in physical distancing to the extent possible.

Districts should prioritize in-person visits to schools and reserve these opportunities for those that need it most (e.g. children of essential service workers or students that require unique supports).

Understandably, physical distancing is challenging in a K-12 educational setting, particularly with younger children. At the same time, it is important that we do what we can to try to assist children in understanding the importance of minimizing the frequency of physical contact with one another. The following ideas should be taken into consideration during planning:

- Avoiding close greetings like hugs or handshakes
- Help younger children can learn about physical distancing by creating games. For example, put on some music and have children spread their arms side to side and spin around slowly trying not to touch their friends. Older children can be provided age appropriate reading material and encouraged to self-regulate.
- Take children outside more often, perhaps breaking children into smaller groups to maintain a degree of distance.
- Set up regular learning activities outside such snack time, arts and craft time.
- Regularly clean and sanitize items that are designed to be shared, such as game controllers.
- Set up mini environments within the school to reduce number of children in a group, i.e., set up 2 or 3 learning areas for numeracy and literacy activities.
- Consider different classroom configurations to maintain distance between children (e.g. separating desks) or different locations in the school (e.g. different classrooms, gym or library, outside).
- Increase the space between children during activities such as snack/lunch, i.e., move or separate tables, move chairs farther apart.
- When children want to use the same area/activity redirect some children to another area.
- Set up distinct areas for children who may have symptoms of illness until they can be picked up.



- Discourage any food or drink sharing.
- Consider staggering snack/lunch time so you can accommodate smaller groups with more space.
- Minimize the number of non-essential people entering the school.
- Reinforce and remind of the rule of “hands to yourself”.
- Consider using educational videos and online programs as a part of learning so children can sit independently and distanced from each other.

Provide reassurance, good listening and maintain routines

Children hear and take in a lot of the talk that is going on around them, especially as they get older.

- Reassure children about their personal safety and health. Tell children that it is okay to be concerned and there is a lot we can do to stay safe and healthy. Make sure the information is suitable for their age level.
- Let them know they can ask questions. Answer questions honestly but make sure that the information is suitable for their age level.
- Maintain familiar activities and routines, as possible, as it can reinforce the sense of security of children. At the same time, build in those physical distancing strategies into your learning activities.

Keeping parents/caregivers informed

- Keep parents and caregivers informed about what you are doing in your educational setting to take extra precautions, be responsive to children.
- Be clear about your policy that children need to stay home if they are sick.

March 27, 2020

Parts of this document have been developed based on the Preventing and Managing Illnesses in Child Care Centres Peel Region <https://www.peelregion.ca/health/infectioncontrol/pdf/ENV-0227.pdf>

